

Remarks:

Applicants acknowledge with appreciation that although the Examiner objects to claim 11 as depending from a rejected base claim, the Examiner indicates that that claim would be allowable if rewritten in independent form to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Nevertheless, claims 1-11 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, ¶ 2, as allegedly failing to particularly point out and to distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. Claims 1-10 also stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), as allegedly rendered obvious by Japanese Patent Application Publication No. JP 2002/048934 in view of European Patent Application Publication No. EP 0 405 620 A2. Applicants respectfully traverse.

As noted above, Applicants are amending claim 1 to overcome the indefiniteness rejection and to include the allowable subject matter of claim 11, and intervening claims 8-10. In view of the foregoing amendments, the sole independent claim contains allowable subject matter and the remaining claims depend from the allowable independent claim. Thus, Applicants maintain that the rejections of claims 1-7 are moot. Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw the indefiniteness and obviousness rejections of amended claim 1 and claims 2-7 and allow claims 1-7.

Conclusion:

Applicants respectfully submit that this application, as amended, is in condition for allowance, and such disposition is earnestly solicited. If the Examiner believes that an

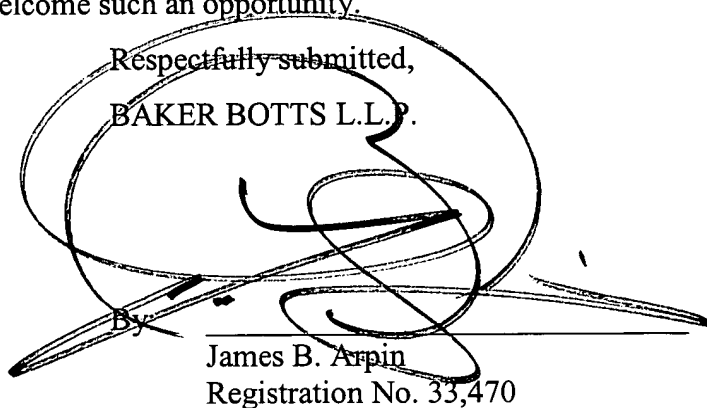
interview with Applicants' representatives, either in person or by telephone, would expedite prosecution of this application, we would welcome such an opportunity.

Respectfully submitted,
BAKER BOTTS L.L.P.

Dated: October 22, 2004

Baker Botts L.L.P.
The Warner; Suite 1300
1299 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20004-2400
(202) 639-7700 (telephone)
(202) 639-7890 (facsimile)

JBA/dw

By  James B. Arpin
Registration No. 33,470